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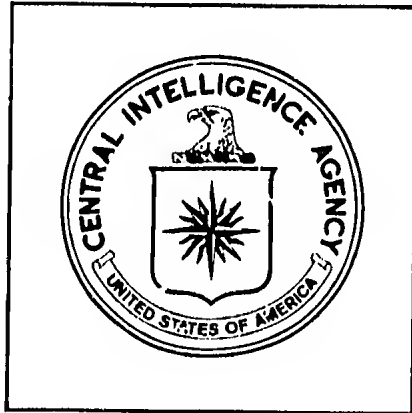
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STAFF NOTES:

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MIDDLE EAST – AFRICA – SOUTH ASIA

This publication is prepared for regional specialists in the Washington community by the Middle East - Africa Division, Office of Current Intelligence, with occasional contributions from other offices within the Directorate of Intelligence. Comments and queries are welcome. They should be directed to the authors of the individual articles.

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Tunisia*Bourguiba Leaves Tunis for Rest in France*

President Bourguiba will depart for France on Sunday for several weeks of rest and a medical checkup.

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Extended periods of relaxation and medical treatment in the past have reinvigorated Bourguiba and enabled him to appear to function normally for a period of time.

Prime Minister Nouira will be in charge of the government while Bourguiba is abroad. The Prime Minister is a competent administrator whose star has risen since the ruling Destourian Socialist Party congress last fall when Bourguiba publicly reconfirmed Nouira as his heir designate. In subsequent interviews and speeches, Nouira has demonstrated greater self-confidence, and seems to be emerging from the shadow of Bourguiba, who has dominated Tunisian politics for more than 40 years. (SECRET NO FOREIGN DISSEM/CONTROLLED DISSEM)

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India*Upswing in Tribal Insurgencies*

A recent increase in armed insurgency by two traditionally restive tribal groups in northeastern India seems to have dampened considerably any chances for a peaceful settlement of longstanding disputes between the central government and the remote tribal states seeking autonomy.

In the state of Nagaland, the Maoist-oriented underground has stepped up military actions, recruitment, and proselytizing in recent months, giving new life to the 19-year old insurgency. The Indian army has sent additional troops to Nagaland; they probably will be allowed a freer hand in dealing with the 1,300 hard-core insurgents.

As a result of the increased insurgent activity, Prime Minister Gandhi has ruled out negotiations with Nagaland's ruling political party, which was voted into power last February on the basis of its sympathy with the underground's demand for a withdrawal of Indian troops from the state and more local control over Nagaland affairs. New Delhi probably expects that the state government's inability to obtain these goals will lead to its early downfall and the eventual reinstatement of the more moderate party that ruled in Nagaland from 1964-74 with New Delhi's tacit support.

The Naga movement had seemed to be waning with the growing realization among separatist-minded Naga leaders that the insurgents are no match for government forces. New Delhi is thus disturbed by the resumption last year, after a two-year lapse, of low-level Chinese assistance to the rebels. At present, 80 Nagas are reportedly trying to enter Burma enroute to training camps in China's Yunnan Province. They would replace another group that, [REDACTED] returned home in late 1974. Indian border troops captured some of the

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recent returnees, along with documents confirming their stay in China for 6 to 12 months. New Delhi suspects China may intend to use its involvement with the Nagas as a minor negotiating lever should the two countries eventually move toward normalizing relations.

In the neighboring union territory of Mizoram, three senior police officials were murdered by rebels on January 13 in the most serious terrorist incident since the Mizo insurgents organized nine years ago. The assassinations probably were meant to underscore the insurgent ultimatum issued in late 1974 demanding that all non-Mizos leave the territory by January 1, 1975. The order reflects a deep resentment of non-Mizo Hindus who administer the territory and monopolize its commerce. The Mizos, who are predominantly Christian, are also rebelling against their forced confinement in pacification centers formed in the late 1960s to enable the Indian army to tighten its control of the state. Although the 700-man underground movement can be intimidated by the introduction of more Indian military forces, New Delhi faces an extremely difficult political problem in trying to quell a population of some 350,000 that is unanimously opposed to the central government's heavy involvement in Mizo affairs.

Demands for regional autonomy have troubled New Delhi since independence. The government's hard line reflects fear that concessions to one group will intensify calls for autonomy elsewhere, such as in Kashmir and South India. Additionally, the possibility that at any time political chaos may erupt in Bangladesh, which separates India's central and northeast regions, compels New Delhi to keep a firm grip over tribal insurgents, who probably would like greater access to long-held sanctuaries in the Chittagong Hill area of Bangladesh. (CONFIDENTIAL)

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India*Nation-wide Port Strike*

The government on January 16 invoked emergency regulations to declare illegal a strike by port and dock workers that began that day and ordered workers back to their jobs. As of January 17 the workers were generally defying the ban and continuing the strike which quickly paralyzed India's eight major ports. Police and security forces have been posted at the docks as a precautionary measure.

The motivation for the strike appears to be purely economic. S. R. Kulkarni, president of the union leading the strike, has described the differences between labor and management as very narrow and has called for resumption of negotiations, which broke down on January 15. Labor is seeking an interim wage increase pending full revision of the dockers' wage structure and has already reduced its initial demands.

Indian officials say they expect a settlement to be reached soon. An extended strike could seriously affect badly needed imports of food, oil, and industrial supplies and could result in a drop in vital export earnings. The parties will, thus, be under heavy government pressure to reach an early accord. In any event, the government will not allow the strike to continue long enough to jeopardize the flow of food imports. Last May the government took harsh measures--also under emergency powers--to smash a nation-wide strike by rail workers, including the arrest of top union leaders and more than 30,000 striking workers.
(CONFIDENTIAL)

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Bangladesh

Opposition to Presidential System Grows

Foreign Minister Kamal Hossain--the major architect of the Bangladesh constitution--is reportedly upset with Prime Minister Mujibur Rahman's proposal to change from a parliamentary government to an authoritarian, one-party presidential system. Hossain and his family left the country this week on a month-long trip [REDACTED]

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The Foreign Minister is known to be one of Mujib's closest confidants. His defection could embolden others who have been resisting Mujib's plans. Some cabinet ministers and parliament members have privately expressed opposition to a presidential form of government, fearing it would diminish their own power and influence.

Parliament members in Mujib's ruling Awami League are meeting this weekend to plan the next legislative session set to open on Monday. Some Bengalee observers think Mujib will unveil his proposals for a new government at this time and that the Awami League will ultimately support him. Mujib prefers to act with the support of his followers, and he may hope to persuade them to go along with his scheme.

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[REDACTED] Mujib, who is well aware of the opposition he faces, instead may dissolve Parliament and proclaim a presidential system under the powers granted him by the state of emergency decreed in late December. The decree was imposed, according to the government, to deal with corruption, lawlessness, and political violence, but Dacca so far has not cracked down on these problems. This has enhanced speculation in Bangladesh that the emergency is merely a stepping-stone to a more authoritarian system. (SECRET NO FOREIGN DISSEM/NO DISSEM ABROAD/BACKGROUND USE ONLY/CONTROLLED DISSEM)

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